

## MASTER GUNNERY SERGEANT PETER PROIETTO

Master Gunnery Sergeant Peter Proietto of the U.S. Marine Corps was faced with a tough decision on March 12, 2003. He could leave his position and seek cover from the enemy ambush, or he could stay in position. Though it would risk his own life, if he stayed he could continue to provide suppressive fire to protect the other Marines in the forward element of the patrol.

Proietto chose to stay in position.

The patrol had been traveling outside of the village of Bara Waze, Afghanistan that afternoon when the Taliban fighters, well armed with an array of weaponry, ambushed.

Proietto had immediately manned the machine gun on his vehicle to lay down suppressive fire on the enemy and to provide supporting fire to the lead element of the patrol, which had been pinned down by the heavy enemy fire.

As the firefight progressed, a heavy crossfire from the enemy mounted against Proietto "to a point of intensity that was amazing" states the narrative that accompanies his award citation. Proietto earned a Bronze Star with 'Valor' for his actions that day.

That's when the Team Sergeant, Master Sergeant Clopp advised him to abandon his position and seek cover, since he was firing from a non-armored vehicle on an open road, and the enemy was concentrating their fire on him.

Proietto knew that if he abandoned his position the forward element would be left on their own with no supporting fire. So he ignored his own safety and refused to leave his position even though everything around him, including his vehicle, was being shot up in the enemy crossfire. He could continue to lay down a steady stream of suppressive fire on the enemy, which he did for almost an hour, and silenced two enemy machine gun positions.

Proietto held his position for almost an hour through intense fire and silenced two enemy machineguns. When his machinegun ran out of ammunition, he grabbed his M4 carbine and began to engage the enemy and spot enemy positions for the gunner.

Eventually the enemy was pushed out of their positions. A running firefight through the mountains ensued until after dark at which time the patrol broke contact and reconsolidated.



**The Bronze Star with 'Valor'**

"Throughout this engagement...Proietto displayed himself in a courageous professional manner and his heroic and immediate response to enemy fire and willingness to jeopardize his own safety to provide supporting fire for the rest of the team demonstrated a level of dedication to the mission and his fellow soldiers, which is rarely surpassed," the award citation states. "His actions and selfless courage under fire was instrumental in the success of the operation and the safe return of all U.S. and Afghan militia forces."